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ABSTRACT

The educational systems of 15 Sub-Saharan African countries are described, and guidelines concerning the academic placement of students who wish to study in U.S. institutions are provided. Tables indicate the grades covered by primary education and secondary education (academic and technical). Burundi, Rwanda, and Zaire have followed the Belgian pattern of education. The systems of the following countries are similar to the French system: Cameroon (Eastern), Chad, Congo (Brazzaville), Dahomey, Gabon, Ivory Coast, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Togo, Upper Volta. The Mali system differs greatly from those of the other countries. In considering the admission and academic placement of students from these African countries, admissions officers should assess students' English language proficiency, as well as their ability to adapt to a new culture. Placement recommendations cover academic records, grades, advanced placement tests, completion of different educational programs, and the systems in different countries. (SW)

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SELECTED FRENCH SPEAKING SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN COUNTRIES

BURUNDI CAMEROON (EASTERN) CHAD
CONGO-BRAZZAVILLE DAHOMEY GABON IVORY COAST
MALI MAURITANIA NIGER RWANDA SENEGAL
TOGO UPPER VOLTA ZAIRE

A Guide to the Academic Placement of Students from these Countries in Academic Institutions of the United States

1975
WORLD EDUCATION SERIES

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HE 017 803

Prepared by
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Preface

This placement pamphlet on a selected group of French speaking Sub-Saharan African countries is based on two major sources: the United States Office of Education publication, "Educational Development in Guinea, Mali, Senegal, and the Ivory Coast," by Jerry B. Bolibaugh,* and the report of the 1973 African workshop, which was organized jointly by the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) and the National Association for Foreign Student Affairs (NAFSA).**

The report from the workshop, which the author was privileged to attend, gives a good description and includes up-to-date (as of 1973) charts of the educational systems of the countries on which these placement recommendations are based. Both sources should be used by the reader as basic supplementary references. However, it is advisable to keep in mind that educational systems worldwide are in a state of flux and that those of these selected African countries undoubtedly are also experiencing change.

Because a number of these systems reflect French influence (in addition to Belgian), it also would be useful to refer to the World Education Series (WES) volume on France (to be published in 1975).

The author is indebted to James S. Frey, assistant director of admissions at Indiana University, for his assistance as WES monitor for this publication.

The placement recommendations were approved by the Council on the Evaluation of Foreign Student Credentials at the July 1975 meeting.

Edouard J. C. Trudeau, M.A., Ed.D.

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**See the bibliography for the full title of the report. (It is available from NAFSA, 1860 19th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. Price $2.50.)

BASIC STRUCTURE OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS

Primary-Secondary Education

GROUP A

Primary	Secondary (academic and technical lycée)		University
	First Cycle	Second Cycle	
6 years of schooling	4 years of schooling	3 years of schooling	
Grades 12-11-10-9-8-7 ‡	Grades 6-5-4-3 □	Grades 2-1-*terminale* ⊙ ○	University

KEY

‡ – CEPE – *Certificat d'Etudes Primaires Elémentaires*

□ – BEPC – *Brevet d'Etudes du Premier Cycle*

⊙ – BAC – *Baccalauréat*

○ – BACT – *Baccalauréat Technique*

AUTHOR'S NOTE: The countries of Group A are Cameroon (Eastern), Chad, Congo Brazzaville, Dahomey, Gabon, Ivory Coast, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Togo, and Upper Volta.

Although Senegal has begun an educational change that would implement a 5-4-3 primary-secondary program (as opposed to the 6-4-3 program they now have), they have yet to change either the cirriculum or the academic standing of secondary school graduates.

Because of the purpose of this pamphlet, only those streams normally leading to university study have been included in this chart, although there are many others. For information about the various streams of the second cycle of secondary education, see the African workshop report, pp. 88-92.

Unlike the countries of Groups B and C, the primary grades in the countries of Group A begin at 12 and go to 7. This reverse order continues through the secondary system.

BASIC STRUCTURE OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS

Primary-Secondary Education

GROUP B

BURUNDI AND RWANDA

Primary	Secondary
1-2-3-4-5-6 ■	7-8-9-10-11-12 #

KEY

■ – *Certificat d'Etudes Primaires*

– *Diplôme d'Humanités*

AUTHOR'S NOTE: As in the case of Zaire (see below), there are many streams of secondary education. Only those leading to university study have been indicated.

ZAIRE

Primary	Secondary		
	Orientation Cycle	Short Cycle	Long Cycle
6 years of schooling	2 years of schooling	3 years of schooling	4th year
Grades 1-2-3-4-5-6 ▽	Grades 7-8 Ψ	Grades 9-10-11 ¶	Grade 12 Ω

KEY

▽ – CEP – *Certificat d'Etudes Primaires*

Ψ – *Brevet du Cycle d'Orientation*

¶ – *Diplôme de fin d'Etudes Secondaires*

Ω – *Diplôme d'Etat*

AUTHOR'S NOTE: For information about the various streams of the short and long cycles of secondary education, see the African workshop report, pp. 143-145.

BASIC STRUCTURE OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Primary-Secondary Education

GROUP C

MALI

Fundamental Education *(Education Fondamentale)*		Secondary Education
Primary	**Middle**	
6 years of schooling Grades 1-2-3-4-5-6 •	3 years of schooling Grades 7-8-9 Φ	3 years of schooling Grades 10-11-12 x

KEY

• – CFEPC – *Certificat de fin d'Etudes du Premier Cycle*

Φ – DEF – *Diplôme d'Etudes Fondamentales*

x – BAC – *Baccalauréat*

AUTHOR'S NOTE: The educational system of Mali also offers various streams of study in rural and agricultural education, in teacher training, and in technical and vocational training. See the African workshop report, pp. 113-119.

Educational Systems

The selected French speaking Sub-Saharan African countries considered in this placement pamphlet have been divided into the following three groups, each based on a different educational pattern:

A	B	C
1. Cameroon (Eastern)*	1. Burundi	Mali
2. Chad	2. Rwanda	
3. Congo-Brazzaville	3. Zaire	
4. Dahomey		
5. Gabon		
6. Ivory Coast		
7. Mauritania		
8. Niger		
9. Senegal		
10. Togo		
11. Upper Volta		

Group A represents the countries where the educational system is still very similar to the French system, with minor variations.

Group B comprises Burundi, Rwanda, and Zaire (formerly Congo-Kinshasa), all of which have followed the Belgian pattern of education.

Mali by itself forms Group C because its educational system differs greatly from those of Groups A and B.

English Language Proficiency

In considering the admission and academic placement of students from these African countries, admissions officers should weigh each student's ability to make rapid adaptation to a new culture, as well as to study in a different language. Admissions officers are urged to use the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or another valid English examination to assess the student's competence in English. Students should not be enrolled in classes until it has been ascertained that they have achieved a level of language proficiency satisfactory to that particular institution.

Most of the students whose academic qualifications meet requirements for admission to a U.S. college or university have studied English as a foreign language from three to six years. However, their ability to read, speak, and write English is

*Western Cameroon follows the British system of education.

limited by a lack of practical experience. They would have great difficulty understanding spoken American English and in expressing themselves orally or in writing. Ordinarily they are not prepared for immediate full-time enrollment in an academic program in the United States. They will need to participate in a full-time intensive English program for a period ranging from three to six months (some might even require two semesters) before beginning academic studies.

Placement Recommendations—Secondary Level

COUNTRIES OF GROUP A (FRENCH EDUCATIONAL PATTERN)

Academic Records

Admissions officers are urged to study carefully the student's transcript or his "student record book" *(livret scolaire)*. This is particularly important because a *baccalauréat* is granted, not for success in each and all of seven or eight subjects, but because a satisfactory general average was achieved. A student may be very weak in or even fail an important subject and yet obtain his *baccalauréat*. Only the transcript will show the actual standard achieved by the student in each subject. This document is not delivered to the student himself; it should be requested by the student (or by the U.S. institution) from the headmaster *(proviseur)* of the secondary school attended.

The transcript or the student record book reports grades for the last three years of secondary school, usually known as *classe de seconde, classe de première,* and *classe terminale.* The academic year is composed of three terms, and grades are reported for course work and examinations for each term. The transcript also contains the class rank of the student, on a subject-by-subject basis, and comments from each of the professors. This information is vital in determining whether or not the applicant has a strong and consistent background in the field of study he or she wishes to pursue in the United States.

Grades

The following rough approximation of grade equivalence is provided to assist in the evaluation of an applicant's transcript.

Grade	U.S. Equivalent (approximate)
14-20	A
12-13	B
10-11	C
9	D
0-8	F

These grades are used for each subject. No similar number or letter grade equivalent can be assigned to the various *mentions* noted on the *baccalauréat*. These *mentions*, which specify the quality of the examination results, are *passable*, *assez bien*, *bien*, and *très bien*. They may be interpreted as acceptable, good, very good, and exceptional.

It should be noted that the vast majority of students receive only *mention passable*, which indicates a much higher level of performance than the term "passing" in American English. Grades awarded in French or philosophy, for example, are frequently low (seldom above 10) and these pull down the overall grade average; as a result, a *baccalauréat mention* of *très bien* is very rare. There is really no failing grade on a subject-by-subject basis since a student may have grades below 9 in one or more subjects and still receive the *baccalauréat* as long as the overall grade average is 9 or higher.

In reviewing the *baccalauréat* diploma and the transcript, the admissions officer should also note the following: 1) whether the *baccalauréat* was obtained at the first sitting, i.e., in June, or at the second sitting, i.e., in September or October; 2) whether the student was required to take a supplementary oral examination after the written test; and 3) whether the student was required to repeat one of the last two years of the secondary school cycle, i.e., *classe de première* or *classe terminale*.

PLACEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS – GROUP A

Students who have completed six years of elementary school and the full seven years of secondary school and who present a *baccalauréat* have completed a program of study and have passed a rigorous examination similar in content and level to that of France and comparable to high school education in the United States. Those who appear to be superior students, as evidenced by their secondary school records and their performance on the *baccalauréat II*, may be given the opportunity to take advanced placement tests which are given to outstanding students in the United States.

1. Students holding a *baccalauréat* in Section A (humanities and philosophy) or Section B (economics) may be considered for admission at the freshman level into a degree program in arts, letters, and social sciences.

2. Students holding a *baccalauréat* in Section C (mathematics and physical sciences), a *baccalauréat* in Section D (natural sciences), or a *baccalauréat* in Section E (science and technology), have a good general background in philosophy, French, and the sciences and may be considered for admission at the freshman level. They are well prepared in mathematics and theoretical science, but their background in laboratory work is weak.

3. Students holding a *Baccalauréat Technique* in Section F (technology) with excellent grades may be considered for admission at the freshman level into a degree program in technical fields. Students holding a *Baccalauréat Technique* in Section G (commerce) with excellent grades may be considered for admission at the freshman level into a degree program in commercial fields. Both of these *baccalauréat* programs are vocationally oriented and normally are terminal.

4. Students who have completed technical programs in various technical secondary schools, but who do not hold a *baccalauréat*, generally should not be eligible for admission to institutions of higher education in the United States. They may hold a *Brevet de Technicien*, but this is not the equivalent of a *Baccalauréat Technique*. These students usually have been directed to technical terminal secondary schools (agricultural, commercial, home economics, teacher training, and technical) after a screening process at the end of the first cycle of secondary school. (The *baccalauréat* program is the only pre-university course of studies which makes a student eligible to apply for university education in Africa.)

5. It should be emphasized that holders of the *Certificat de fin d'Etudes Secondaires* do **not** have the equivalent of the *baccalauréat*. This certificate is simply a document confirming class attendance in the last year of secondary school *(classe terminale)* and, as such, has no academic value. In most cases, a student who presents the *Certificat de fin d'Etudes Secondaires* was not successful in his attempt to pass the *baccalauréat* examination.

COUNTRIES OF GROUP B (BELGIAN EDUCATIONAL PATTERN)

BURUNDI AND RWANDA

In Burundi and Rwanda students who complete six years of primary school and six years of secondary school receive the *Diplôme d'Humanités*. This is the equivalent of a U.S. high school diploma, and a student who has passed with a grade average of 60% or better may be considered for admission at the freshman level into degree programs in the United States.

Before accepting a student from these countries into a college level program in the United States, attention should be given to the stream of study (section) in which the applicant was enrolled during the last three years of secondary education (the transcript will give this information). Obviously, the students who were in humanities or literary studies will be better prepared for degree programs in those areas, while students who were in a science section will be better prepared for courses in science, arts, and social studies.

The grading system used in Burundi and Rwanda is similar to that in effect in Zaire (see page 9).

ZAIRE

In Zaire* students who complete six years of primary school and six years of secondary school receive the *Diplôme d'Etat.* It is equivalent to a U.S. high school diploma, and a student who has passed with a grade average of 60% or better may be considered for admission at the freshman level. (Only three out of every five students who sit for the state examinations each year are successful.)

Before a student from Zaire is accepted into a U.S. college program, attention should be given to the stream of study (section) in which the applicant was enrolled during the last cycle (four years) of secondary education. Those who were in literary studies will be prepared for a degree program in humanities. Students who were in a science section will be prepared for freshman science or applied science courses. (The transcript clearly indicates the section and courses taken, with their results.) Students who were in other sections (i.e., agricultural, commercial, teacher training) do not have the preparation normally required for university level work.

For the evaluation of grades on an applicant's transcript, the following approximation of grade equivalence may be used:

Grade	U.S. Equivalent
80-100	A+ (very rare)
70-80	A
60-70	B
50-60	C
0-49	F

Secondary school transcripts can be obtained from the school attended, and individual grades in each subject should be studied by admissions officers. The transcript grades mean much more than the general average on the *Diplôme d'Etat,* which indicates only the total number of points earned on an aggregate basis.

In Zaire, a special *Diplôme de fin d'Etudes Secondaires* is given to students who complete the shorter cycle of secondary school (three years) and should not be taken as the equivalent of the *Diplôme d'Etat.*

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*Formerly Belgian Congo, Congo-Leopoldville, and Congo-Kinshasha.

COUNTRY OF GROUP C – MALI

In Mali the primary-secondary school system consists of twelve years of schooling–nine years of "fundamental education" *(education fondamentale)* and three years of secondary education–leading to a *baccalauréat*. The Malian *baccalauréat* is given in two parts, the first after grade 11 and the second at the end of grade 12. Only those who have succeeded in both examinations earn a *baccalauréat* which should be considered comparable to a U. S. high school diploma. A student from Mali who holds a *baccalauréat* from an academic *lycée* (not a technical one) may be considered for admission at the freshman level to degree programs in the United States.

Students who have followed a science program are better prepared for mathematics or pure or applied sciences. Those who have followed a program in the humanities or letters (classical or modern) are better prepared for these areas of study.

Students who hold a *Baccalauréat Technique* (from a *lycée technique*) have received a more vocationally-oriented training and have followed a program weak in pure mathematics and science. It is therefore recommended that these students not be admitted to U.S. colleges or universities, except perhaps to certain programs in technical colleges or community colleges where strong mathematics or theoretical science preparation is not required for admission.

L'Ecole Centrale pour l'Industrie, le Commerce et l'Administration (ECICA) trains technicians for state industries or civil service in a four-year course following fundamental education which ends with grade 9. Although these students have completed thirteen years of schooling, their training is of a very practical and technical nature and prepares them directly for work and not for university education. They might be considered for admission to a U.S. community college offering a technical program in their area of specialization.

The grading system used in Mali is similar to that in the countries of Group A (see p. 6).

Placement Recommendations—Tertiary Level

The recommendations which appear below pertain to the most common degrees and diplomas of the universities in the countries included in this publication. Studies leading to other diplomas or degrees and completed at French speaking higher educational institutions in these countries should be evaluated on a course-by-course basis. The same procedure should be followed in regard to studies for which no diploma was received.

GROUP A

Students who have a *Diplôme Universitaire d'Etudes Littéraires* (DUEL) will have completed two years of specialized university work in one of the following areas: philosophy, classics, modern literature, foreign languages, or history and/or geography. They may be granted transfer credit for this work on a course-by-course basis.

Students who have a *Diplôme Universitaire d'Etudes Scientifiques* (DUES) will have completed two years of university work in one of three areas: mathematics and physics, physics and chemistry, or natural sciences. They may be granted transfer credit for this work on a course-by-course basis.

In Senegal and the Ivory Coast students who have a *Diplôme d'Etudes Juridiques Générales* (DEJG), a *Diplôme d'Etudes Economiques Générales* (DEEG), a *Diplôme Universitaire de Technologie, de Commerce et de Gestion* (DUTG), or a *Diplôme Universitaire de Technologie* (DUT) may be granted transfer credit for this work on a course-by-course basis.

Students who have a *Diplôme d'Ingénieur de Travaux* or a *Diplôme d'Ingénieur-Technicien* may be granted transfer credit for this work on a course-by-course basis.

Universities in most of these countries offer the degree called the *licence*, which is based on a three-year program (four years in law or economics), after the *baccalauréat* or other secondary school diplomas. Students with these degrees may be considered for admission to U.S. graduate programs. Some undergraduate deficiencies may have to be made up, depending upon the relevancy of the *licence* major to the desired graduate program.

Students holding the degree of *Ingénieur de Conception*, which represents four or five years of study, can be considered for admission to graduate studies in engineering or other appropriate fields.

Those who hold the *maîtrise* or a *Diplôme d'Etudes Supérieures* (DES) have completed one or two years of academic study after the *licence* and may be considered for admission to programs of graduate study at a level to be determined by the nature of the *maîtrise* completed and its relevancy to the graduate program the student wishes to enter.

A *Doctorat du 3e Cycle* is being offered in a few fields by some African universities. It requires one to two years of academic study beyond the *maîtrise*. University officials in the United States will have to study each case individually, making a decision after an indepth interview, and a careful study of the candidate's record and research. There is no recommendation that would be valid in all cases. In general, the *Doctorat du 3e Cycle* should not be considered as comparable to a Ph.D. in the United States, and students holding the degree should be considered as candidates for doctoral programs. The *Doctorat d'Etat* is comparable to the U.S. doctorate.

GROUP B

BURUNDI

The *Université Officielle de Bujumbura*, founded in 1964, offers tertiary level courses in law, letters and history, social sciences (economics, sociology, commerce), science, and medical studies. It does not yet offer a full program leading to a *licence*, but only two or three years of university work, the equivalent of a Belgian *candidature*. Students must go abroad to continue their university work. Students who have completed this first cycle successfully may be granted transfer credit on a course-by-course basis.

The *Ecole Normale Supérieure du Burundi* offers a three-year tertiary level program of teacher training, after the *Diplôme d'Humanités* (secondary school diploma). Credit earned by students who have completed this course of studies may be considered for transfer towards a bachelor's degree in education on a course-by-course basis.

RWANDA

The *Université Nationale du Rwanda*, founded in 1963, has four Faculties:

- la *Faculté des Lettres*
- la *Faculté des Sciences*
- la *Faculté de Sciences Economiques et Sociales*
- la *Faculté de Médecine*

The first three offer a three-year program leading to a specialized bachelor's degree: *Baccalauréat ès Lettres, Baccalauréat ès Sciences* or *Baccalauréat ès Sciences Economiques et Sociales.* Students who have one of these degrees may be granted transfer credit on a course-by-course basis.

The University is now offering a one- or two-year *licence* and even the *maîtrise* in a few of its programs. The latter requires an additional year. An evaluation of the content of the *licence* and the *maîtrise* should be made on a course-by-course basis to determine their comparability to U. S. degrees. These are new degrees, and at this early stage it is not possible to make general recommendations.

The Faculty of Medicine is affiliated with the *Université de Gand* (Ghent, Belgium) and offers two programs, a five-year program for medical assistants and a six-year regular program for physicians.

Admissions personnel of medical schools should consult with the dean of the Faculty of Medicine, *Université de Gand*, before accepting these six-year students for specialized study in medicine.

ZAIRE

All institutions of higher learning in Zaire are unified under the *Université Nationale du Zaire* (UNAZA). In the academic faculties, the first cycle of the university is a two- or three-year program which leads to a diploma known as the *graduat*. Students holding the *graduat* may be granted transfer credit on a course-by-course basis.

In advanced teacher training and technical institutes known as *Les Instituts Supérieurs Pédagogiques et Techniques*, the *graduat* is granted after three years of tertiary study of a practical and professional nature. This diploma still is considered comparable to the two-year program of the academic faculties of the university; therefore, students who have the three-year *graduat* may be granted transfer credit on a course-by-course basis up to a maximum of two years.

The *baccalauréat* or *licence* requires two to three years of study beyond the *graduat* and is comparable to a U.S. bachelor's degree. Students who receive a *mention distinction* or higher may be considered for admission to graduate programs in U.S. institutions.

The grading system at the *Université Nationale du Zaire* is:

90-100 – *très grande distinction* (extremely rare)
80-89 – *grande distinction*
70-79 – *distinction*
50-69 – *satisfaction*
0-49 – *échec* (failure)

The *maîtrise* or *doctorat* requires two to four years of study beyond the *licence* or *baccalauréat* and is comparable to the U.S. master's degree or, in some cases, slightly beyond.

GROUP C – MALI

At present Mali has no national university in the traditional sense. Students at the university level study in one of the seven separate higher institutes described below:

1. *L'Ecole Normale Supérieure* offers a four-year program leading to the *Diplôme de l'Ecole Normale Supérieure*. Graduates may be granted transfer credit on a course-by-course basis toward a bachelor's degree program.

2. *Le Centre Supérieur Pédagogique*, which offers a three-year program leading to the *Doctorat de Spécialité du 3e Cycle*, requires for admission a *diplôme* from *L'Ecole Normale Supérieure*. This degree is slightly beyond the U.S. master's degree. Graduates may be considered for admission to an Ed.D. or Ph.D. degree program.

3. *L'Ecole Nationale d'Ingénieurs* offers a four-year academic and professional program which includes practical training. Graduates may be granted transfer credit on a course-by-course basis toward a bachelor's degree program.

4. *L'Ecole Nationale d'Administration* offers a three-year program in public administration. Graduates of the ENA may be granted transfer credit on a course-by-course basis toward a bachelor's degree.

5. *L'Ecole Polytechnique Rurale* offers a three-year course in agriculture. Graduates may be granted transfer credit on a course-by-course basis toward a bachelor's degree.

6. *L'Institut de Productivité de Gestion Provisionnelle*, which opened in 1973, provides practical and technical training in business and commerce. Graduates may be considered for admission to an M.B.A. program in the United States.

7. *L'Ecole d'Assistants de Médecine*, which offers a five-year course after the *baccalauréat*, is affiliated with the Faculty of Medicine of Marseille (France). This institution offers a training program in preventive medicine, but the degree earned is not comparable to a U.S. medical degree.

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